

STATEMENT BY CHRISTOPHER ROBERT HILL
BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
APRIL 11, 2000

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased and deeply honored to appear before this committee today in connection with my nomination to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Poland. I am grateful for the confidence and trust the President and Secretary of State have placed in me. If confirmed by the Senate I look forward to the opportunity to pursue our country's many interests in Poland and to work closely with the members of this committee and the rest of the Congress to achieve our goals.

The Republic of Poland is a different country from the one I served in during the 1980's. For Poland the last decade of the 20th century represented a period of inspirational and historical change away from a hard and bitter historical past. Having led the process of transformation that swept across East Central Europe Poland is now a fully functioning democracy with one of the fastest growing economies in Europe attracting some \$40 bil of foreign investment. In the past year it has become a treaty ally of the United States and understands that that status involves real responsibility. Its troops now serve shoulder to shoulder with ours in such difficult missions as Bosnia and

Kosovo and as I observed during a trip over the weekend to Kosovo have earned the respect and praise of US military commanders.

The United States maintains an active and engaged relationship with this new Poland across the gamut of bilateral and multilateral issues. Our two countries share a common vision of Euro-Atlantic cooperation based on enduring values and on common national interests. Poland, in short, has become one of the strongest links the United States has in Europe and it is in our country's own interests to keep it so.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed by the Senate I can promise you that I will be vigorously engaged in pursuing a broad range of U.S. interests.

First of all, I will be a tireless advocate of United States business interests in Poland. I will work hard to assure that our businesses are offered a fair and level playing field as Poland continues its membership negotiations with the European Union.

I will work intensively with the Poles to develop our security relations as allies so that through our common efforts NATO and the transatlantic relationship will continue to be strengthened.

If confirmed I will also do all I can to maintain the bonds that have existed for so many decades between our peoples going back to the founding of our nation. These bonds form the basis on which our political, security and economic relations can further develop and prosper.

Finally, the conduct of our foreign relations is not just carried out by an ambassador. It is really a team effort. And so, if confirmed, in approaching my work I will make sure that Embassy Warsaw and the Consulate General in Krakow continue to be highly motivated and a strong and reliable factor in the development of our relations. I know from my own experiences, some very painful experiences, that working overseas involves risks. Therefore, the welfare of that staff, indeed the welfare of all American citizens living and traveling in Poland, will be an ongoing and essential priority.

Mr. Chairman, I have served in the Foreign Service for over 22 years and have worked half of that time in overseas posts including a tour at our Embassy in Warsaw. I know what our country means to people overseas, our leadership, our example and our sheer energy, and how we continue to inspire people across the globe. But I am also acutely aware of the burdens

placed on the United States, especially the sense that our resources and responsibilities know no bounds. As important as those overseas years have been in understanding our role in the world, I consider the years I have spent in the United States no less important to understanding the foundations of our foreign policy. Because when we are serving overseas we are serving the American people back home, and serving their interests. Without their support for what we are doing in their name, we cannot succeed.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to address you. I look forward to answering any questions.